

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1375

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education, March 28, 2017
Ways & Means, April 3, 2017

Title: An act relating to providing students with the costs of required course materials.

Brief Description: Providing students at community and technical colleges with the costs of required course materials.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Van Werven, Tarleton, Orwall, Griffey, Haler, Holy, McCabe, Young, Dent, Riccelli, Bergquist, Buys, Kraft, Kagi, Ryu, Muri, Goodman, Lovick, Frame and Hargrove).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/08/17, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 3/16/17, 3/28/17 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 3/30/17, 4/03/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs community and technical colleges to provide the cost of required textbooks and other course materials and to identify whether the course uses open educational resources to the maximum extent practicable once the ctcLink system is implemented.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wilson, Chair; Bailey, Vice Chair; Palumbo, Ranking Minority Member; Frockt.

Staff: Clint McCarthy (786-7319)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Braun, Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Rossi, Vice Chair; Honeyford, Vice Chair, Capital Budget ; Ranker, Ranking Minority Member; Rolfes, Assistant Ranking

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Minority Member, Operating Budget; Frockt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member, Capital Budget; Bailey, Becker, Billig, Carlyle, Conway, Darneille, Fain, Hasegawa, Keiser, Miloscia, Padden, Pedersen, Rivers, Schoesler, Warnick and Zeiger.

Staff: Michele Alishahi (786-7433)

Background: Higher Education Opportunity Act. The federal government passed the Higher Education Opportunity Act (Act) in 2008, which required institutions of higher education receiving federal assistance to post textbook costs and information on their Internet course schedule, such as the International Student Book Number (ISBN) and retail price. However, if the disclosure is not considered practicable, the institution may state To be determined. The Act also required the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to study the implementation of this requirement. In a 2013 study, the GAO found that 81 percent of schools sampled provided textbook information online. Washington passed a similar textbook law in 2006.

Washington's Course Material Price and Information Disclosure Law. The institutions of higher education are required to have rules to ensure their affiliated bookstores:

- provide students with the option of purchasing materials that are unbundled when possible;
- disclose to faculty and staff the costs to students;
- disclose publicly how new editions vary from previous editions;
- actively promote and publicize buy-back programs;
- disclose retail costs for course materials on a per course basis to faculty, staff, and the public; and
- disclose information to students regarding the titles, authors, editions, prices, and ISBN at least four weeks before the start of class for required course materials.

Faculty and staff are also supposed to consider the least costly practices in assigning course material, such as using the cheapest edition available, using free online web and library sources, or using free, open source textbooks when available.

The ctcLink System. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) has begun implementing a single, centralized software system for each of the 34 community and technical colleges (CTCs) in which students, faculty, and staff will have access to a variety of tools online. The ctcLink system has been implemented at Tacoma Community College, Spokane Falls Community College, and Spokane Community College thus far.

Summary of Bill: Community and technical colleges are directed to provide the following information to the maximum extent practicable once the ctcLink system is implemented:

- the cost of required textbooks and other course materials; and
- whether or not a course uses open educational resources.

In the event that a course's required course materials are not determined prior to registration due to an unassigned faculty member, the course materials cost must be provided as soon as feasible after a new faculty member has been assigned. The CTCs are directed to report to the State Board which courses provided the cost information on textbooks and course materials, and what percent of the total classes reported this information. The report is due January 1st of each biennium, beginning with January 1, 2019.

This act has a null and void clause.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education): PRO: This is about making the cost of going to college less expensive. This is a bill that is intended to help with cost. This is a student led bill—this is something they asked for. This gives students more information that helps them choose courses. This bill helps students map out their higher education experience in the most cost effective way possible.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education): PRO: Representative Luanne Van Werven, Prime Sponsor; Arlen Harris, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Jessi Bagdasarov, Bellevue College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Different classes have varying levels of cost. For many students, they have to pick classes months before they know their financial aid package. Then they have a sticker shock when they realize their financial aid most often does not cover the full cost of textbooks for the courses they already selected. They scramble to find a few hundred dollars for textbooks, often in just a few weeks. This creates a lot of unnecessary stress when they should be focusing on their course work. Therefore, I urge you to support this bill.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Elissa Goss, Executive Director, Washington Student Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.